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The Bulletin of The Museum of Modern Art



The Place de la Concorde, Paris. The building marked by an ellipse is the Musée du Jeu de Paume where the Exhibition of American Art, 1609-1938, assembled by the Museum of Modern Art, opens on May 24th.

Exhibition of American Art in Paris

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Foreword

On the 20th of April the steamer Lafayette sailed from New York for Le Havre with 83 cases of painting, sculpture, photographs, films and architectural models for the Exhibition of the Art of the United States scheduled to open in Paris on May 24th at the Jeu de Paume Museum. After six years of unavoidable postponement the Museum is finally to see one of its most important projects become a reality. It is hoped that this, the most comprehensive and elaborate exhibition of American art so far attempted in Europe, will stimulate a more balanced exchange of interest in the field of art.

The Musée du Jeu de Paume, the gallery of modern foreign art is, like its *pendant*, the Orangerie, an adjunct of the Louvre. A long, two-storied building, facing on both the Place de la Concorde and the rue de Rivoli, it provides an admirably central and accessible location for an exhibition of American Art in Paris.

The exhibition has been planned very much along the lines of the Museum's own departmental organization. The upper floor of the Jeu de Paume and half the lower will be given over to painting, sculpture, prints and photographs. The rear half of the ground floor is to be divided between architecture and moving pictures. One of the galleries is to be converted into a projection room for showing the history of the American film by means of excerpts from the films themselves. The inclusion of architecture, photographs and cinema in addition to painting and sculpture is a radical departure from the usual exhibitions of national art arranged by other countries in Paris.

Months of intensive work have gone into the assembling and cataloging of the exhibition. President A. Conger Goodyear has selected the section of painting, sculpture and prints with the assistance of Dorothy Miller of the Museum staff. The review of American architecture, probably the most comprehensive exhibition of its kind ever brought together, has been in charge of John McAndrew, Curator of Architecture and Industrial Art. The Museum's Librarian, Beaumont Newhall, has assembled the survey of American photography. John Abbott and Iris Barry, respectively Director and Curator of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, have organized the film division with its combination of stills and projections. The task of listing and insuring hundreds of valuable objects has been the arduous responsibility of Dorothy Dudley, the Museum's Registrar.

On the following pages each of the four divisions of the exhibition is described by those chiefly responsible for their selection. The catalog which will be published in both French and English will greatly amplify these brief descriptions.

This catalog will be distributed to members of the Museum during the 1938-1939 season as one of the regular Museum publications.

Although the following acknowledgement is made without permission of the donors, the members of the Museum should know that Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Mr. Goodyear have between them underwritten most of the American share of the exhibition's expenses. Mr. Goodyear (who will not be given an opportunity to censor these lines) has also borne not only the difficult responsibility of choosing the painting and sculpture but, in addition, has given most generously of his time and enthusiasm during six years of negotiation. Without his steadfast interest the exhibition could scarcely have been achieved.

ALFRED H. BARR, JR.

Painting and Sculpture

As in the oft-cited case of the man and the dog, an American exhibition of Parisian art is no news but a Parisian exhibition of American art is. Whether bad news or good remains to be seen. European indifference to the work of the artists of the United States is perhaps not so universal as is commonly believed. In the preliminary surveys looking to this exhibition a real desire to show our artistic goods was expressed by the authorities of at least three countries—France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The British to be sure displayed an attitude of characteristic incredulity. In any case, we must admit that an ardent interest is not to be expected in something almost entirely unknown. There has never been a comprehensive exhibition from this country shown in any European city.

Because of the limitations of space, permitting the hanging of only about two hundred canvases and the showing of forty sculptures and eighty prints, the present exhibition is far from all-inclusive. However, it does contain many of the finest examples of the work of our artists from Colonial days to the present time, and to bring about this result has been the constant aim in our selections. The intention is to exhibit work of an arresting quality and not to illustrate our artistic history or the development of any artist. Those responsible for the choice—and I admit the chief responsibility—believe that this intention has been achieved. There is very little second best among the many items. Unfortunately, all of the best were not available but most of them were. The generosity of public and private owners of the masterpieces of American art has been most extraordinary.



Winslow Homer: *Eight Bells*, oil, 1888. Lent by the Addison Gallery of American Art to the Exhibition of American Art in Paris.

The sculpture section consists almost entirely of contemporary work. The only exceptions are Remington's "Broncho Buster," two reliefs by St. Gaudens and five examples in the folk art collection.

In the graphic arts the emphasis is on the colored engravings of Audubon, the lithographs of Bellows, Mary Cassatt's dry points and aquatints, lithographs published by Currier & Ives and prints in various media by Whistler. Each group comprises about six examples. In addition, this section will include works of some thirty contemporary artists.

Less than one-third of the painting and water-colors were produced before 1900. Of about one hundred and fifteen artists represented ninety are still living or have died within the last fifteen years. About twenty-five per cent of the canvases are water-colors.

In the exhibition Winslow Homer shows clearly as our greatest artist. If there could have been added to the number of his oil paintings "The Gulf Stream," "The Fox Hunt," "All's Well," "The Herring Net," "Search Light—Santiago Harbor," "Right and Left," "Wind Storm Bahamas," "The Portage" and many more, the quality of his showing would lose no ground. His water-colors of the first rank are so many in number that to limit our choice to eight was most difficult. Eakins, lacking "The Gross Clinic," "The Concert Singer" and "Miss Van Buren," to mention only a few, and Ryder without "Jonah and the Whale," and "The Flying Dutchman" are Homer's fit companions but not his peers. On Homer is founded the great tradition of American water-color and in Homer we find the finest expression of American genius.

A. CONGER GOODYEAR



Charles Burchfield: *Promenade*, 1928. Lent by A. Conger Goodyear to the Exhibition of American Art in Paris.

Architecture



Photo Federal Art Project, W. P. A.

Detail from the Capitol, Washington, D. C. Included in the architectural section of the Exhibition of American Art in Paris.

The architectural section of the exhibition will consist of enlarged photographs, charts, maps, plans, a dozen models of historic and modern buildings and a film. Comprehensive captions in French and English will accompany all the material, which will take up 500 running feet of wall space—almost two city blocks.

On entering the architectural section the visitor will see, high above his head, two giant fir-wood maps. From Spain, England and Holland on the map of Europe streamers stretch to those places on the map of the United States where colonists from the three European nations first settled: settlements marked by the dates on which the colonists landed. From these dates other streamers stretch down the wall to photographs of houses, forts and churches—Spanish, English and Dutch—the

earliest extant buildings in the United States.

Photographs and models present the next phase: the chronological development of monumental architecture through the Colonial and early Federal periods. The visitor then retraces in his own person the course of architectural history: literally turning the corner on Thomas Jefferson's house, Monticello, he enters the Neo-Classic period. From a blaze of white temple porticoes adorning houses, churches, banks, tombs and barns, he passes through the vagaries of 19th and 20th century derivative styles, all monumental, all showing a close relation to Europe.

But: he is confronted by a doorway on which BUT is written: while all this was going on, in centers more removed from European influence robust local styles were being evolved, a straightforward domestic vernacular. They are all shown: the adobe pueblos of the Southwest, the stone barns of Pennsylvania, and, above all, the wooden houses of New England. The farmhouses, silos and covered bridges which we take so completely for granted have interested and gratified such European critics as Le Corbusier, Gropius, Breuer and Behrendt, and they are presented with special thoroughness as characteristic of an admirable phase of American architecture with which most Europeans are unfamiliar.

This section of the exhibition has been arranged by Elizabeth Mock of the Museum staff.

The next work shown is not strictly architectural in the orthodox sense. It consists of stringently utilitarian industrial and commercial building: factories, bridges, grain elevators and clover-leaf under-passes. In these purely functional structures many discoveries were made by engineers which were subsequently



Photo Ben D. Gross

San Xavier del Bac, Tucson, Arizona. Included in the architectural section of the Exhibition of American Art in Paris.

to become important to architects. Among the numerous results of such technical innovations probably the most important was the evolution of the skyscraper.

The technical and esthetic development of the skyscraper are shown in a brief film photographed for the Museum of Modern Art by Ebenezer F. Thompson. The film also includes a graphic presentation of the social and economic changes in American life which made the skyscraper a necessity.

In a separate alcove are arranged enlarged photographs of the work of the three great American architects: Henry Hobson Richardson, Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright: Richardson, whose work in traditional materials forecast the straightforward honesty of much modern building; Sullivan, the father of the skyscraper, the first to give a truly architectural form to steel construction; and Wright, who more than any other individual established the principles underlying what we know as modern architecture.

The architectural section of the exhibition concludes with a panorama of contemporary building in the United States, arranged by Janet Henrich of the Museum's Department of Architecture. The latest example shown is a model of the new building for the Museum of Modern Art.

JOHN McANDREW

Photography

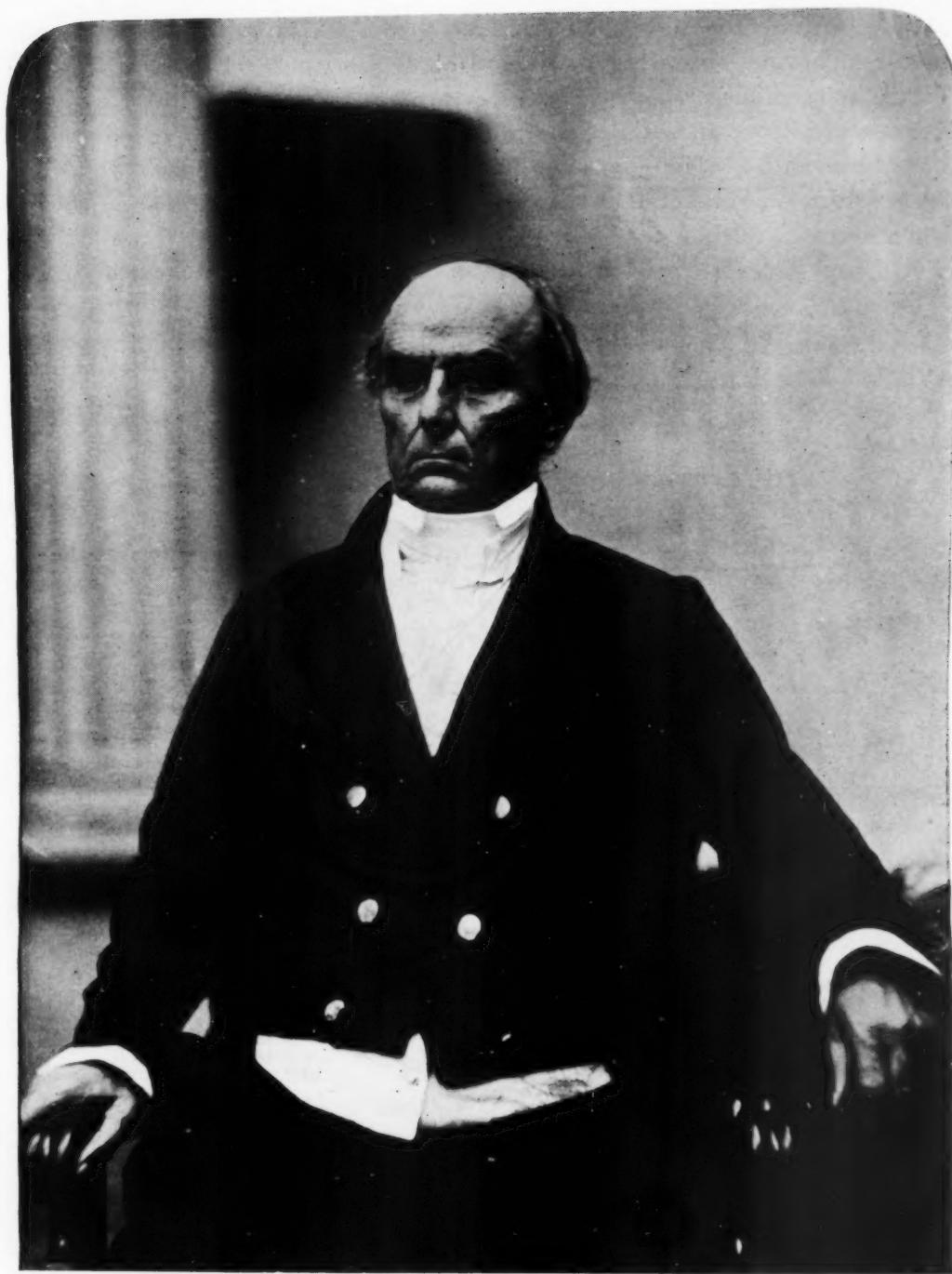
Half of the sixty photographs selected are by living workers; the others represent work which in the past won for this country international fame—daguerreotypes of the 1850s, photographs of the Civil War, and Muybridge's experiments in the photography of animal locomotion made in the 1880s.

Besides its intrinsic value, the daguerreotype portrait of Daguerre made by Charles R. Meade in 1848 is an interesting tribute by an American to the French inventor of the process which bears his name. A powerful portrait of Daniel Webster and an unusual architectural view by Southworth and Hawes, a portrait of Longfellow by their rival Whipple, and an intimate self-portrait of Matthew B. Brady with his wife and sister are among the other important daguerreotypes. The precision of detail and the clean-cut contrasts of this process appealed to our national taste; it has formed a tradition still unbroken.

It can be seen in the poignant wet-plate photographs of the soldiers, the battlefields and the devastation of the Civil War taken by Brady and Gardner, of which eight have been included. It can be seen, too, in Russell's photographs of the building of the Union Pacific Railroad.* That Muybridge, whose studies of animal locomotion are famous, worked in this tradition is not well known; two of his Guatemala scenes are therefore of special interest.

Modern photography begins, technically, with the perfection of instantaneous exposures; esthetically with the work of Alfred Stieglitz. Two of his original

* The two exhibited have been chosen from the Union Pacific Railroad Company's generous gift to the Museum of 17 original prints by A. J. Russell, dated 1867-68, and 9 copies of Savage's photographs of the driving of the last spike at Promontory, Utah, May 10, 1869.



Southworth & Hawes: Portrait of Daniel Webster, daguerreotype, 1851. Lent by Dr. Edward Southworth Hawes to the photography section of the Exhibition of American Art in Paris.

photogravures ("Steerage" and "Excavating") have been extracted from *Camera Work*, organ of the Photo-Secession group which he founded in 1902. From the same magazine Steichen's portrait of J. P. Morgan, his remarkable early color photograph of Shaw (1908), and two photographs by Paul Strand have been chosen. The continuation of the esthetic tradition of the Photo-Secessionists may be seen in prints by Ansel Adams, Ira Martin, Charles Sheeler and Edward Weston.

Although records have long been made by the camera, only recently has a conscious esthetic been based on the photograph's value as a sociological document. Lewis Hine studied child-labor exploitation with the camera as early as 1908; since then Berenice Abbott, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn and others represented in the exhibition have photographed America from this point of view for government agencies or for newly founded picture magazines—two forces which have fostered the remarkable popularity of photography during the past few years.

BEAUMONT NEWHALL

Films

Among the contemporary American arts, the motion picture is by far the most familiar in France. It was not until about 1908 that American films began to be seen abroad to any extent, and not until war-time that they became an important source of supply for European cinemas: but our Wild Western films, the Keystone cops and the inimitable Chaplin carried everything before them. What is more, when a serious enthusiasm for the movies would have been regarded, in this country, as childish or insane, Frenchmen like Guillaume Apollinaire, Maurice Raynal and Jean Cocteau were already extending the friendly arm of critical appreciation over this popular and lively medium.

In assembling an exhibition on the American film, the problem was therefore, in a sense, the simple one of selection from material already known to its French spectators. The exhibition consists of three parts: a large display of still-photographs from motion pictures produced in America between 1895 and 1937, a display of material selected from the recent *Making of a Contemporary Film* show given by the Museum and—most important—daily showings of films.

As regards the latter, the Film Library has already gathered together a comprehensive collection of motion pictures. From this library it was not difficult to select for showing in Paris those which most vividly indicate the steps and phases by which the American film has developed. But the time devoted to the

running of films is limited to periods of fifty minutes each: practical considerations made this necessary, but it created a real problem. The majority of films last eighty minutes or over; and to present an outline of the American film's history in less than ten hours would generally be regarded as difficult in the extreme. Also, a film is an entity and when a whole film exists, it is usually no more justifiable to show a snippet of it than to offer a reader pages torn at random from a book. Yet parts of films were all that could be included in the program,



A rare still, never before reproduced, from D. W. Griffith's *Hearts of the World*, 1918, showing Lillian Gish and Noel Coward. Included in the film section of the Exhibition of American Art in Paris.

if anything like a comprehensive history were to be indicated, and so the problem resolved itself (much as in publishing a history of American literature) into the preparation of an *anthology* of the American film.

The film's forty-three years of history fall naturally into three distinct periods, therefore three separate fifty-minute programs have been assembled. These are entitled: *From the Invention of Films to "The Birth of a Nation,"* *Progress and Close of the Silent Era*, and *The Sound Film*. They represent

twenty-three pictures. *The Great Train Robbery* and a Mack Sennett comedy complete with cops, Chaplin and Buster Keaton, Garbo and Valentino, Mickey Mouse and Mae West, *The Covered Wagon* and William S. Hart (beloved in France as *Rio Jim*) with his pony are all included: so are Fred Astaire and the Marx Brothers. D. W. Griffith is seen making his screen debut in 1907 and Mary Pickford appears in a film he directed in 1912. Al Jolson inaugurates the talkies with a song and a speech, Edward G. Robinson recalls the era of gangster films. The Mississippi itself closes the brief survey, in a fine sequence from the U. S. Government's film, *The River*.

The technical problems met in assembling these three programs were severe: only the warm-hearted co-operation of the motion picture industry could have overcome them. Especial thanks are due to members of the legal departments of Paramount Pictures, Loew's Incorporated, Warner Brothers, 20th Century-Fox Films, and RKO Radio Pictures who guided us through the intricacies of copyright and other restrictions which obtain in such circumstances. Mr. Alan Friedman of De Luxe Laboratories provided extraordinary facilities during the tricky business of making up the prints to be shown. M. Fernand Auberjonois gallantly undertook the translation of film subtitles, as well as of all the material in the gallery displays.

IRIS BARRY

On March 10th the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art was granted a *Special Award for Distinctive Achievement* by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences "for its significant work in collecting films dating from 1895 to the present, and for the first time making available to the public the means of studying the historical and aesthetic development of the motion picture as one of the major arts." The Academy members, on whose ballot the award was given, include actors, technicians, writers, engineers, directors and producers. Among previous winners of the award are D. W. Griffith and Walt Disney: this is the first time that any person or organization outside the film industry has been so honored.

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